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BY EDWIN FOLVEN / MAY 13, 2020

Appetite for Firehouse Dinners keeps growing



Councilman David Ryu delivered food to personnel at Fire Station 27 in Hollywood in observance of Fire Service Day.
(photo courtesy of the 4th Council District Office)

Firefighters at 13 stations feasted on barbecue ribs on May 9 through an expansion of the Firehouse Dinners program, a partnership between Los Angeles City Councilman David Ryu, 4th District, the nonprofit First-In Fire Foundation and the Original Farmers Market.

Through the program, meats and groceries are purchased at Farmers Market retailers using council office discretionary funds and money raised by the First-In Fire Foundation. Ryu personally delivered the food to three fire stations in the 4th District in Hollywood, the Cahuenga Pass and Sherman Oaks on May 9, in

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observation of Fire Service Day, while staff members delivered food to the other fire stations. Firefighters enjoyed ribs from Huntington Meats and Sausages, potatoes and broccoli from Farm Boy Produce, and apple and cherry pies from Dupar's, all at the Original Farmers Market.

"The Los Angeles Fire Department is extremely grateful to Councilmember Ryu and the First-In Fire Foundation for their generous donation to several of our fire stations," LAFD Deputy Chief Graham Everett said. "Councilmember Ryu has always been a strong supporter of public safety, and we truly appreciate his efforts to recognize our members on Fire Service Day."

The Firehouse Dinners program was initiated on April 8 as a pilot project, with the First-in Fire Foundation coordinating deliveries of food from the Farmers Market to Fire Station 61 on Third Street in the Miracle Mile area. The foundation supports local fire stations with beautification projects and other needs not funded by the city. Firefighters purchase their own food while on duty for days at a time, and often can't shop for ingredients to make nutritious meals. First-In Fire Foundation founder Lyn MacEwen Cohen said the Firehouse Dinners program fits perfectly with her mission of supporting Los Angeles Fire Department personnel.

"What a perfect way to thank our local hometown heroes, delivering firefighters' favorite foods, comfort foods, right to the firehouse door," Cohen said. "We collaborate with outstanding partners and trusted leaders, Council District 4 and the Original Farmers Market. Special delivery by our dedicated Councilmember David Ryu punctuates the importance of this strong community-fire department partnership at the grass roots level for neighborhood preparedness in this pandemic and beyond."

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Ryu said firefighters serve a critical role in protecting the community, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The idea is to expand the program to other fire stations in the 4th District once logistics were in place. It could serve as a model citywide if other partners are identified.

“Los Angeles firefighters continue to serve our city with courage throughout this coronavirus pandemic,” Ryu said. “Most years, we’d celebrate Fire Service Day with a community celebration or pancake breakfast. This year, I thought we could show our appreciation and our support for small businesses by buying meals for all the fire stations in Council District 4. I’m proud to work with First-In Fire and the Original Farmers Market to serve our local firefighters.”

Mark Panatier, vice president of the A.F. Gilmore Company, owner of the Original Farmers Market, added that the market and its merchants were happy to help.

“We are so pleased that our merchants were asked to participate in the First-In Fire Foundation’s and Councilman Ryu’s Firehouse Appreciation Day program,” Panatier said. “Providing nourishing and delicious food is what our grocers and restaurants do best. I know our participating businesses are thrilled to be a part of this heartfelt thank you gift to the brave men and women at our local fire stations who work so tirelessly for our community each and every day.”

Ryu’s spokesman Mark Pampanin said restaurants and other businesses may want to support local fire stations in their neighborhoods and encouraged their participation. He added that the councilman is working on a larger program with the Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department in which the city may enter contracts with restaurants to feed vulnerable populations. That program would also create a funding source for the restaurants.



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Anyone wishing to help with the Firehouse Dinners program can visit firstinfirefoundation.org.



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